

How technology advances are driving hybrid university education models

Universidad Europea educates 17,000 students each year at campuses in Madrid, Valencia and the Canary Islands for domestic and international careers in financial services and various other sectors. Dr. Susana Sousa Santos, Head of the International Business Academic Program in the School of Social Sciences and Communication, explains that as the COVID-19 pandemic gripped the country, the university quickly adapted by offering highly flexible teaching and learning experiences thanks to its strong focus on technology.

Adapting to change with hybrid teaching-learning models

As a leading Spanish university, we have had to transform how we teach our students and how they learn and develop by introducing hybrid models, and even faster because of the pandemic. We have worked quickly to strengthen our approach with our HyFlex Experiential Learning Academic Model. It is entirely flexible and uses technology to combine 20% campus-based teaching, 60% between campus-based and remote classes based on student choice, and 20% of the content is entirely digital. Hybrid models in university education are the future and are here to stay.

Our ability to rapidly adapt our learning environments and methodologies is a success story and competitive advantage today. However, to make the most out of the learning experience and remain at the forefront of innovation and professional approach, a tool such as Refinitiv® Workspace is essential.

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Defining the three elements of competition

Competition between universities is based on the combination of three elements: teaching, research and transfer.

As we've adapted our learning environments and teaching methodologies during the pandemic to remain competitive, this has enabled us to emphasize our vocation for educational innovation. In teaching, we have to continuously assess the suitability of any learning environment, such as face-to-face, hybrid or online. We've built up extensive experience in different teaching environments, such as hybrid education, and by implementing experiential, collaborative and multidisciplinary teaching methodologies, including flipped classroom and challenge-based learning.

In research, educational institutions' contribution is fundamental. We use relevant, market-leading databases and workflow tools, such as Refinitiv Workspace for Students, to help us make valuable contributions, for example, in the field of corporate social responsibility. We're excited to be rolling out our 100 Refinitiv Workspace licenses across our institution to boost our research capabilities.

Crucially, with high-quality research, we should be able to contribute to the transfer of knowledge with the creation of patents, which continues to be relatively weak in Spain. Also, fostering closer ties to industry and the wider economy are very important for the university education sector.

Connecting education and industry

Private universities like ours in Spain account for 20% of the student market and we are growing significantly, especially in postgraduate studies. As innovation is part of our vocation, we offer degree courses that seek to respond to the demands of the labor market and society at large. So, maintaining links with companies is very important for us – in fact, 60% of our teaching staff combine teaching with professional work at companies.

We need to continue increasing our relevance in terms of educating professionals with strong technical knowledge, soft skills, values and attitudes to contribute to Industry 4.0 and face the challenges posed by so-called volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA) environments.

Our strategic commitment to the challenge-based learning methodology implies, among other measures, investment in professional and simulation tools, as well as training resources that our professors can use in the classroom.

We chose Refinitiv Workspace for Students for its experiential-learning qualities and the improved access to and use of international data and content. Also, Workspace drives digitalization, improved technological skills and internationalization for our professors and students, and improves our students' prospects for quality employment and higher incomes.

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Preparing our students for success

Students have told us that when they talk to their peers at other universities, they are impressed by the opportunity to use Refinitiv Workspace for Students. Having Workspace differentiates us, but knowing how to use it is very important too, so ongoing training will be vital.

We also hear from our students how they love using international professional tools because they believe they are empowered to prepare for real-world careers. They also really value enhancing their CV by becoming certificated in using industry-leading tools.

Creating a future based on partnerships

As the future of society depends on all of us, our collective ability to imagine and promote partnerships for good and our creativity and generosity are all decisive factors. Our experience with Refinitiv has been one of very positive collaboration and commitment to education, which could extend further to our evolving educational models and development of new degree programs. We look forward to collaborating with Refinitiv representatives and other members of the financial markets to strengthen the ties between education, society and economy. ■

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